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AN
INAUGURAL ESSAY
ON
CATAMENIA.

AN

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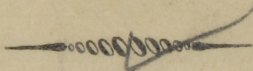
SUBMITTED TO THE EXAMINATION OF

CHARLES ALEXANDER WARFIELD, M. D.

President, and the Medical Faculty

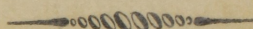
OF THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF MARYLAND.

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHYSIC.



By Charles L. Snyder...of Virginia,

MEMBER OF THE BALTIMORE MEDICAL SOCIETY.



“Felix est qui potuit, rerum cognoscere causas.”

Baltimore :

PRINTED BY BENJAMIN EDES.

Corner of South and Market-Streets.

1812.

INAUGURAL ESSAY,

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

CHARLES ALEXANDER WARFIELD, M.D.

President, and the Medical Faculty

OF THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF NEW-YORK

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHYSIC

By Charles J. Snyder, of Virginia.

AND ONE OF THE BARRISTERS AT LAW.

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Corner of South and Market Streets.

1812.

TO

ELISHA DE BUTTS, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF CHYMISTRY,

IN THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF MARYLAND.

THIS dissertation is inscribed as a small

Tribute of respect for his talents,

And as a mark of


Personal regard and esteem,

By his sincere friend,

The Author.

TO
ELISHA DE BUTTS, M. D.
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY,
IN THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF WASHINGTON.

THIS dissertation is deposited as a small

 *THE laws of this institution require*
a publication of Thesis.

ON

MENSTRUATION.

MENSTRUATION, is a periodical discharge from the uterus of every healthy woman, who is not pregnant, or who does not suckle, from the age of puberty to that of an age considerably advanced.

The early or late appearance of the discharge, depends upon all those causes which influence the growth and maturity of the girl, viz. climate, manner of living, education, associations and original stamina of constitution.

Climate assists nature in producing a more early or late discharge of this fluid, according to its temperature. Heat being an universal and powerful stimulus, gives tone and vigour to the system and tends to assist its early evolution with such rapidity, that girls in some of the warm climates menstruate, at the early age of eight, nine, or ten years. On the contrary, as we advance toward the north, we observe a gradual protraction of the

discharge until we come to Lapland, where we are informed, they do not menstruate until the advanced period of twenty years, or later, and then only in small quantities, and in some instances only in the summer ; animal life being too low in those cold situations, during winter.

Certain associations and modes of education, by enlarging the mind and expanding the imagination, afford many sources of pleasure and amusement, which exert an astonishing influence in bringing about the early evolution and maturity of the female system, from the natural influence which the mind has in all instances upon the body, and which is demonstrable by observing the difference in the first appearance of this discharge, in girls in affluent circumstances, and those differently situated. This difference, however, has been considered as attributable to the leisure, indolence, and relaxation attending girls in affluent situations. This opinion is refuted by the arguments of Professor Davidge, in an essay upon this subject; also Dr. Chapman's notes on Burns; both of which amply prove, that the menstruous fluid, is a secretion, and depending as much upon the healthy tone and vigour of the system generally, as also the uterine vessels performing this office, as that of the secretion of bile, gastric juice, urine or any other secretion, performed by the different functionaries of the system.

It is asserted and credited by Dr. Denman, (of whom we should not have expected such declarations) that some women never menstruate, their constitutions not requiring or allowing this discharge ; using both terms, though differing in their true signification, as though he knew not which was most correct or definite, but for safety chooses both. In the first term, not requiring the discharge, I beg leave to differ with him, and observe for the present, that I believe it as essential to the health and life of the female, as the secretion of bile.—But am perfectly agreed to use the second, the system may not allow the discharge, which I shall shew is the consequence of some irregular action:

Some women, of very robust habits, or such as generally have a very abundant evacuation of the catamenia, do at times, menstruate, during pregnancy. In these cases, the office of secretion is performed by the arteries, of the os tincæ.

In the United States, there can be no specific time given, for the first appearance of the menses, as they appear, sooner or later, being influenced, by difference of latitudes, and our continent affording as many gradations of temperature, as perhaps the world besides, there is the same variety in the time of the first appearance of this evacuation. However, they appear in the states of Virginia and Maryland, from the twelfth to the sixteenth years, sooner or later, according to the health of

the girl, connectedly with the causes before mentioned as influencing the different periods.

Denman, Burns and others, observe, that there are many changes taking place, after the first menstruous discharge, as consequences of, or produced by the menstruous flux; as expression and animation of countenance, gracefulness of attitude, intelligence of conversation, expansion of the breasts, &c. These appearances however, are the results of, or criteria by which we determine the attainment of puberty, and are only consequences of that state, as is also the discharge itself.

Healthy girls begin to menstruate without any previous indisposition; and although asserted by all the writers upon the subject, whom I have had an opportunity of consulting, that their first appearance is always accompanied by some premonitory symptoms, as pain in the back, loins, inferior extremities, with various hysterical affections; I believe those symptoms to be the consequences of disease and not the healthy concomitants of the discharge. For I have made enquiry of many healthy girls, who informed me, that they never had a pain in the back, loins or otherwise at those periods, and are uniformly very cheerful and by no means disposed to hysteria. Nature being able at all times, when unmolested by disease, to execute her designs, it is absurd to admit the idea, that she should find it expedient to call in the aid of disease, to the accomplishment of any healthy process.

The quantity of fluid discharged at each evacuation, is regulated by the climate, constitution and manner of living; but from the great variety in the health of most young women, it varies in the same woman, at different periods.

However, there is an usual quantity to which women, under similar circumstances, approach, which in Virginia and Maryland is from six to ten ounces.

The time required for the completion of each period of evacuation, differs considerably, being influenced by a variety of circumstances; generally from three to six or eight days.

The cessation of the menses, appears to be governed very much by the early or late appearance of the same originally. But the common time of cessation in this country is from the forty-fourth to the fiftieth years: though I have known one instance of a woman, having a child, who was upwards of sixty years of age, and have no doubt but many such exceptions occur.

It appears not to be known by many of those, who admit the catamenia, to be a secretion, who gave the world the first publication on this subject. I will therefore, in this place observe, that Dr. Davidge made this the subject of his inaugural essay, for the degree of doctor of physic, in Edinburgh, in the year 1794. To which I refer those who may favour me by reading this essay, in justification of my opinion of the catamenia being a secretion.

IRREGULARITIES OF MENSTRUATION.

SECTION FIRST.

AMENORRHŒA.—This term is used to express both the retention and suppression of the menstrual flux.

By the first term, we understand, that the menses, have not yet appeared. By the second, we mean the interruption of a function already established.

I shall here differ from all the writers upon the catamenia, who uniformly (I think I may venture to say) consider its irregularities idiopathic diseases. I should here experience much delicacy and diffidence in thus publicly advancing new doctrines, conscious of the unwelcome reception with which innovation is met, particularly coming from the pens of young men, by persons of established reputation and who suppose their opinions correctly formed, by the experience of many years practice, did I stand alone; but am supported by Dr. Davidge, whose opinions are founded upon the sure base of sound sense, observation and logical reasoning, governed by experience, and unbiassed by fancy and enthusiasm—and upon whose decision, I am willing to risk the present subject. The catamenia being proved

to be a secretion, it must necessarily follow that the irregularities of the same are only symptomatic. For I presume no man will confess himself so unscientific as to call the offices of natural functionaries, disease.

The catamenial evacuation may be interrupted, either by debility, fever, or malformation. Of which I shall treat seperately.

First, the irregularity from debility, which includes both the retention and suppression.

This state may be induced, by all the different causes noticed by writers, as tending to reduce the system, which are protracted or injudiciously treated; diseases of all kinds, both accute and chronic, as pulmonary consumption, rheumatism, autumnal fevers, &c. &c. Other causes, that tend to weaken the system, as scanty and bad diet, fatigue or a want of sufficiency of exercise, also certain affections of the mind, such as grief, fear, anxiety, disappointed love, and intense thinking, long continued, upon all disagreeable subjects, or such as tend to depress the animal spirits; all of which operate powerfully in debilitating the system.

The symptoms attending this state of debility, are such as are present in general debility, under all circumstances, viz: a sense of languor and weariness, a pale and sallow complexion, œdematous swellings of the lower limbs, complaints of the stomach, such as flatulency, acidity, loathing of food, but craving indigestible sub-

stances, as lime, chalk, &c. Pains in the head and different parts of the body, with various hysterical affections. In this state of the system, we see every organ performing its office with difficulty, or the functions of many entirely suspended, and often we find the uterus, among the last, resigning its healthy office.

The catamenial flux, is interrupted or suppressed by fever, by whatever cause induced, as well as debility. When this occurs, there are all the diagnostics of the presence of fever at any other time, as increased frequency, fullness and tension of the pulse, a dry skin, thirst, hurried respiration, constipation of the bowels, with pain in the head, back and uterus. Though all these symptoms are not always present, yet there are a sufficient number of them attending to prove the real character of fever. Further, it may at all times be observed that the fever makes its appearance first; which circumstance is sufficient to prove that the fever is the original disease. For, we frequently discover the inconveniences resulting from the interruption of the catamenia, such as pain in the back, head, &c. Among the last symptoms that we are advertised of, after the commencement of the original disease. We may account for its operation by referring to the general law of the animal economy, by which we know that a certain action of the arteries is necessary for the healthy performance of every function in the system; so too high or too low action, will interrupt the processes necessary to health.

On the contrary it has been said, by authors that the suppression of the catamenia, produced the fever and that in consequence of the suppressions there have occurred hemorrhages, from different parts of the body, as the nose, lungs, stomach, and hemorrhoidal vessels and that these hemorrhages, observe a periodical form.

These hemorrhages we find, only appear in habits extremely debilitated, or such as labour under scorbutic affections. In which cases we find many of the other functionaries of the system impaired before the irregularities of the catamenia are manifested. Very few arguments, are necessary, to refute the idea that the suppression of the catamenial flux produces fever. In the first place, if we relieve the system of the fever by the remedies suited thereto, viz: bloodletting, using the neutral salts, &c. Instead of anticipating the catamenial evacuations, we put the system in a condition, to perform this secretory office; and it would be as absurd to suppose that this secretion, would be obviated, as that any other secretion would be suspended, by the loss of a moderate quantity of blood. As long as the system, has blood enough to support a healthy action, the catamenial secretion as well any other will go on in their proper order, though not to the same extent in a given time. For it does not necessarily follow, that if blood be lost to a considerable extent, that a healthy action of the system cannot exist; for a weak action, does not imply a diseased action. In

justification of the last position, I would observe that numberless cases have come within my own observation, in the course of my medical studies, in which young ladies have been attacked with fevers, a short time previous to the menstrual period and have been bled to the extent of several pounds in the course of twenty-four hours, and as soon as the febrile action was reduced, the menstrual secretion commenced. During the course of this winter I saw a patient who a few days previous to the catamenial period, was exposed to the influence of very cold and damp weather. A most alarming phrenitis ensued, attended with delirium, convulsions, and dilated pupils, with the most obstinate constipation, and the general accompanying symptoms of this disease in its most formidable appearance. As I was present and the attending circumstances requiring immediate relief, at half past two o'clock P. M. I drew about sixteen ounces of blood, from the arm; which affording no apparent relief, I repeated the bleeding a second, a third and a fourth time, a in few hours and took at least fifty ounces of blood, in the several bleedings, which threw the patient into a state of syncope. From the alarming appearances that had preceded, I made no effort to restore the patient, consequently she remained in a state approaching to syncope, during the night. By morning the arteries recovered their regular action and the patient was able to get up; perfectly relieved of every disagreeable symptom and suffering

no other inconvenience, than what would result from temporary debility. In the course of the day the catamenial discharge commenced and instead of being even diminished, was more copious, than was customary. Many similar instances will occur, to every medical gentleman who will observe; though this I consider particularly worthy notice, being an instance, in which larger evacuations were made than usual in the course of a few hours, and from a young lady of a very delicate habit.

I am aware, here, that I am coming into conflict, with the opinions, taught by Doctor Cullen and others, men, who have acquired the highest rank in the medical world. But as I conceive it, by no means improper, for a man, who has a reputation to establish, to borrow from those, who have much to spare, when it can be taken from that portion, to which they are not entitled by merit; I may take the liberty of deriving a little from such sources.

— We are informed by the writings of Doctor Cullen, that there must necessarily exist a general plethora in the system, before the catamenial discharge, can occur. This idea, however, was consequent, to his unacquaintance with the real nature of catamenial discharge, for he considered it blood. We need not be surprised, at the absurdities, taught a few years ago, when we find that time makes very little change, as to the advancement of science. For at this time, we are taught by the lec-

tures in a neighbouring university, that disease is necessary to constitute health.—If plethora were necessary, to the catamenial discharge it would, at all times be prevented, by the previous use of the lancet; but in no instance, do we see this occur, unless used to such an extent as to influence also, the other functionaries of the system.

As a regular formation and reciprocal action of every part, of the female organs of generation, are necessary, to the healthy action and function of each individual part, the retention of the menses, may be consequent, to an absence or imperfection of the ovaria or any other natural part. There is much reason to believe, that some circumstances of this kind, frequently occur, and are among the many reasons, that may be assigned, to account for the permanent absence of the menses in many women, and their being incapable of impregnation, during life. It is certain, that several instances have occurred, of permanent suppression of the menses, in consequence of the loss of a part of these organs.—If we may be allowed, to reason analogically, we may account, for most instances of original insusceptibility of impregnation, in the human female. For we are daily evinced of the effects produced by the extirpation of the ovaria, of many of the inferior animals. Many constitutional diseases are daily presenting to physicians, proceeding from these very occult causes: producing a variety of disagreeable symptoms; as general debility, pains

in the back, hips and uterus, with various hysterical affections and irregularities of the menses. Which physicians either from a want of science, or a knowledge of the laws of the economy of the genital organs, treat as common hysteria; and several instances I have known to be treated for rheumatism, supposing the pains, complained of in the back and hips, to be muscular, without giving themselves the trouble to discover the real cause. And as these last symptoms are most apt to occur in women, considerably advanced in years, and have borne children, many physicians are apt to consider them merely the natural consequences of the age of the woman, particularly if this state appear, about the period of the cessation of the menses; and leave them to cure themselves, which they suppose will happen after the catamenial discharge, shall have terminated. The consequences of such neglect and ignorance, frequently are scirrhus, cancer and finally death.

When the retention and suppression of the menses are consequent to constitutional debility, the objects to be kept in view, are to give tone and vigour, to the system generally, without attending particularly to the irregularities of the catamenia, as they are only symptomatic of the general affection. A variety of articles of the *materia medica*, have been recommended, with much zeal and emphasis, under the term *emenagogues*, and still retain a place as a class in the *materia medica*. From

a firm conviction that there are no articles of medicine, that have the quality of bringing on and continuing the catamenial discharge regularly, but on the contrary, tend by their stimulant operation, very much to lay the foundation for future hemorrhages, from the uterus; I could wish that the term, were rejected. As those medicines when used for this purpose, are not only exceedingly injurious, in their consequences, but the term itself, serves to give young men, incorrect views of the real nature of the catamenial secretion.

The plan of treatment, best calculated to afford relief, is such as tends to alter the habit, by a general tonic and restorative operation. This object is to be attained first by curing the original disease, if any exist in the system. This will be done by the use of those remedies best calculated, to the removal of the particular disease.

If debility alone, be present, the remedies are, exercise of all kinds in favourable weather, such as riding on horseback, in a carriage, swinging, dancing and walking. These operate powerfully in restoring the system, when not used to such an extent, as to produce debility and fever. Travelling a distance from home, has a most happy effect in restoring the tone of the system, as there are in addition to the exercise, many sources of amusement. When the circumstances and state of the patient's health, will justify these advantages, they should not be omitted as there are no articles of the materia medica,

perhaps more efficient than this plan, in the accomplishment of our object.

The cold bath is a most salutary remedy in every case of debility, unaccompanied by fever, and may be ranked among the best. Before using this remedy however, the patient should have the advice of a physician in every instance, as it is of the utmost importance that the state of the patient be particularly attended to before and during the use of the bath.

The medicines that appear most effectual and best calculated to give tone to the system in this state, are the different preparations of iron, as the tinc. ferri. muriat. carbon. ferri. &c. the Peruvian bark, gentian, quassia, and the nitric acid. The columbo is also an article of much importance, in this state of the system. These several remedies are to be used according to the condition of the patient, regulated by the good sense of the attending physician.

MENORRHAGIA,

OR

IMMODERATE MENSTRUATION.

SECTION SECOND.

UNDER this head the writers on the catamenia confound this symptom with uterine hemorrhage. These two conditions of the system are as different and as distinctly marked as any two variations of the system can be. The first being a diseased discharge of the catamenial fluid, consequent to some irregular action in the system; therefore only symptomatic: while the second is an idiopathic disease, being a discharge of blood constituting a genuine hemorrhage.

We are able, further to distinguish the two discharges by the coagulability or incoagulability of the fluid discharged. For the catamenial fluid comes away as secreted, in a fluid form, invariably. On the contrary, when there is a discharge of blood, coagula very frequently form, even in the uterus, and are discharged in clots.

Again, different conditions of the system appear necessary to these different evacuations. For excessive

menstruation occurs most frequently in girls, or those who have not borne children, and is excessive from long continuance, and is never attended with any immediate danger.

On the contrary, hemorrhage, or the discharge of blood from the uterus, is very different and depends upon the general causes that produce hemorrhages, from any other part of the system, and frequently the effusion of blood is very profuse, and proves fatal in a very short time.

Further, married women, or those who have borne children, are more subject to uterine hemorrhage, than girls who have not had children.

With these reasons, I shall leave the subject of hemorrhage, as improperly treated of under this head, and confine myself to the diseased state of menstruation.

That excessive menstruation is a consequence of constitutional debility, we infer from the general debility, which exists invariably, in all instances in which this affection appears, as well as the peculiar symptoms that attend this state; as pains in the back, loins, and uterus, together with the swellings of the lower parts of the abdomen during the period of the menstrual discharge; also from the remedies that relieve this painful operation. All of which seem to be symptomatic of debility. As this state of the system, as well as the retention and suppression of the menses, depends upon constitutional debility, the same general remedies are to be used in this state of the system, that are used in those two different states.

During the period of the discharge, as there is considerable pain; it is necessary to advise some gently stimulating medicines. Of these, opium and camphor, or

what is much better, proper proportions of opium and ipecacuanha in combination, which will in most instances answer our purpose exceedingly well. The warm bath, in that form called semicupium will also afford relief in most instances, and I think should never be omitted.

Before concluding this dissertation, permit me thus publickly to acknowledge, the many obligations, I feel myself under, to the professors of the different branches of medicine in this college: for the many advantages they have been pleased to afford me. Accept, gentlemen, my most sincere wishes, for your future prosperity. May your merit ever meet a just reward, and may your endeavours to improve the science of medicine, be crowned with honour to yourselves, equal to the blessings, they may afford mankind.

Baltimore, May, 1812.

ERRATA.

Page 13 line 25, omit "in Edinburgh in the year 1794." page 15 line 7, for functionaries, read functions, page idem line 7, for seperately read separately, page 16 line 1st, the large P in pains should be a small p; page idem line 21, the large A in among should be a small a; page 18 line 1, for justification read justification; page 20 line 6, for functionaries read functions; page idem, last line, for spmptoms read symptoms; page 21 line 26, for emenagogues read emmenagogues.

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